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DCYF news release

Rhode Island Chosen to Pilot “SAFE” Model of Evaluating Families for Adoption and Foster Care

Innovative New Process/ Evaluation Method for Completing Home Study for Potential Foster and Adoptive Families Expected to Begin Within 90 Days

Patricia Martinez, Director of the Department of Children, Youth and Families, has announced that Rhode Island has been chosen to participate in an innovative adoption and foster care evaluation program called Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE). Designed by the National Consortium for Children, this innovative pilot program uses alternative methods of gathering information from prospective foster and adoptive parents to determine their ability to provide safe and nurturing homes for children. Under a federal Adoption Opportunities grant, the Consortium for Children is able to bring the ground-breaking program along with related tools and training to Rhode Island free of any cost to the state, and Rhode Island will be the first state to pilot this initiative. Other states chosen for participation are Colorado, Georgia, New Jersey, Nevada, Texas and Utah along with the Cherokee Nation.

According to Martinez, SAFE was originally designed to upgrade and equalize adoption home study policy in California but it has proven to be an effective tool in working with foster families and relative foster families as well. The model has been shown to save time, increase disclosures and promote uniformity and consistency in conducting home studies.

At the present time, each foster care and adoption agency in the state employs its own method for assessing applicants. When reviewing an approved home study, questions often arise as to what went into the study and what was the basis for the approval. SAFE will provide all agency workers with the tools to complete comprehensive and uniform psychosocial evaluations. Approval of a foster or adoptive home study will be based less on subjective judgments and more on reliable information and objective measures. The end result will be an improvement in the quality of the placement resources available to children and greater stability in placements for children.

The grant includes a comprehensive evaluation component headed by Dr. Rosemary Avery from Cornell University and Madelyn Freundisch, Director of Policy for Children's Rights. It will include an expert review of both SAFE and non-SAFE home studies and will make conclusive observations about SAFE and its comparison to previous modes of home study.